

# Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

## 9th Dec 2021

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### Isolation Tips

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#### **S.Korea considers expanded COVID-19 home care as new cases top 7000**

South Korea will consider expanding home treatment of COVID-19 patients, a health official said on Wednesday, as both new daily infections and severe cases hit record highs, putting hospital capacity under strain. Infections in South Korea have skyrocketed this month after the government began to ease restrictions under a so-called "living with COVID-19" scheme in November. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) reported 7,175 new coronavirus cases and 63 deaths for Tuesday, the first time daily infections topped 7,000, while hospitals treated a record 840 critical and serious cases.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-reports-over-7000-new-daily-covid-19-cases-first-time-yonhap-2021-12-07/>

### Hygiene Helpers

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#### **Norway again hardens COVID-19 curbs to try to halt spread**

The Norwegian government introduced stricter rules on Tuesday to limit the spread of COVID-19, including a cap on the number of visitors in private homes and shortening the hours bars and restaurants can serve alcohol. The Nordic country has seen a surge of COVID-19 infections in recent weeks, followed by a rise in the number of hospitalisations. "We really wished we were done with the pandemic. But the situation is now so serious that we must put in place new measures to keep control," Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre told a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/norway-again-tightens-covid-19-restrictions-bid-halt-spread-2021-12-07/>

#### **Sweden to reintroduce many COVID-19 measures as cases rise**

Sweden will reintroduce a raft of measures to curb rising COVID-19 infections, urging renewed social distancing and the use of masks in public transportation, the government said on Tuesday. "We see an increased spread of infection, but still from low levels," Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson told a news conference. "We need to work together to that the situation doesn't get worse, so today we are presenting further precautionary measures."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-reintroduce-many-covid-19-measures-cases-rise-2021-12-07/>

#### **Pfizer, BioNTech vaccine neutralises Omicron with three shots**

Neutralising antibodies seen one month after third dose. Pfizer CEO says seeking booster shot is the best option. Vaccine may still protect against severe disease Any vaccine relaunch could be achieved in March 2022.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/biontech-pfizer-say-test-shows-3-doses-vaccine-neutralise-omicron-2021-12-08/>

#### **Fans must show vaccine pass to attend top-level games in England**

Fans in England will need to show proof of double vaccination against COVID-19 or a negative test to attend top-level sport after British Prime Minister Boris Johnson imposed tougher COVID-19 restrictions in the country on Wednesday. The British government has made the NHS COVID Pass mandatory for any event with more than 10,000 people in a bid to slow the spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/fans-must-show-vaccine-pass-attend-top-level-games-england-2021-12-08/>

## Community Activities

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### **Maine activates National Guard amid hospital bed shortage**

Maine's governor activated as many as 75 members of the Maine National Guard on Wednesday to help expand capacity at health care facilities. The state is dealing with a surge in COVID-19 that has challenged its hospitals. A record of 379 people were hospitalized Wednesday with the virus. Democratic Gov. Janet Mills said the guard members will be used in non-clinical support roles. That will include supporting nursing facilities and helping to administer monoclonal antibodies to prevent serious illness from the virus and keep patients out of critical care, Mills said. Mills and other state officials said those steps will free up hospital beds. The announcement came as the state's largest hospital, Maine Medical Center, said it has postponed about 50% of surgeries because of the burden of COVID-19 on the facility.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/maine-activates-national-guard-amid-hospital-bed-shortage/ar-AARCs4p>

### **Unvaccinated parents highly unlikely to OK COVID vaccine for their kids**

A research letter yesterday in JAMA Pediatrics shows that 25.6% of a sample of US parents responding to an online survey said they were hesitant to vaccinate themselves against COVID-19, and these parents were highly unlikely to approve of COVID vaccination for their children—by a wide margin. In the ongoing CHASING COVID nationwide cohort study, City University of New York researchers analyzed responses from the June 2021 survey of 1,162 parents of 1,651 children 2 to 17 years old. Willingness to have their children vaccinated varied from 8.3% to 13.9% in vaccine-hesitant parents, depending on the age of the child, compared with 64.9% to 86.4% among parents who had already gotten the COVID vaccine or were willing to receive it.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/12/unvaccinated-parents-highly-unlikely-ok-covid-vaccine-their-kids>

## Working Remotely

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### **Work from home again: UK tightens rules amid omicron spread**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced tighter restrictions Wednesday to stem the spread of the omicron variant, urging people in England to again work from home and mandating COVID-19 passes for entrance into nightclubs and large events. Johnson said it was time to impose stricter measures to prevent a spike of hospitalizations and deaths as the new coronavirus variant spreads rapidly in the community. "It has become increasingly clear that omicron is growing much faster than the previous delta variant and is spreading rapidly all around the world," he said in a press conference. "Most worryingly, there is evidence that the doubling time of omicron could currently be between two and three days."

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/work-from-home-again-uk-tightens-rules-amid-omicron-spread/ar-AARCntl>

### **Remote work's loyalty problem: Risk of 'culture crisis' rises with employees isolated at home**

Working from home during the pandemic loosened professionals' ties with the consultancies or law or accountancy firms that employed them, the Financial Times recently reported. The lifting of lockdown then encouraged job-hopping because candidates could now bond with prospective employers face to face. These are two sides of the "out of sight, out of mind" coin: heads, the isolation of remote working reduces loyalty to your existing employer; tails, the revival of in-person encounters encourages you to form an attachment with a new one.

<https://financialpost.com/fp-work/remote-works-loyalty-problem-risk-of-culture-crisis-rises-with-employees-isolated-at-home>

### **Remote work expert: share screen, make social calls to boost inclusion**

Survey after survey suggests that younger workers, in particular, feel held back by remote working. This is because they miss out on the chance to share their ideas and experience — known as "water-

cooler" moments. Nick Bloom, Stanford professor of economics, has been researching the impact of remote work for two decades, and advises big tech firms about their office return. His own research has found that when it comes to younger workers, career progression can be impacted by working remotely. Bloom spoke to executive editor Sriha Srivastava about the long-term effects of working from home, and gave some tips on how to minimize the challenges.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/remote-work-expert-stanford-nick-bloom-work-inclusion-2021-12>

## **Virtual Classrooms**

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### **Lockdown harmful for almost every child's education, Ofsted warns**

Nearly all children in England have fallen behind in their education and suffered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Ofsted has warned. The watchdog has called on schools to offer pupils sport and extra-curricular activities to ensure children "regain a sense of normality" in their lives. Chief inspector Amanda Spielman warned that many of the youngest children's progress and development "faltered" amid the pandemic, with some regressing in basic language and social skills.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/lockdown-harmful-almost-every-childs-22385839>

### **What to do when technology fails: an educator's survival guide for online classrooms**

Online teaching allows educators to reach students all across the globe, but the technology that enables this flexibility cannot be taken for granted. All of it can and will fail at some point, and the onus is on teachers to possess the technological know-how to resolve these issues at short notice. The article goes through seven tips on how to troubleshoot common technical issues encountered in online teaching

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/what-do-when-technology-fails-educators-survival-guide-online-classrooms>

## **Public Policies**

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### **UK's Johnson orders probe of staff party during lockdown**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday ordered an inquiry and said he was "furious" after a leaked video showed senior members of his staff joking about holding a lockdown-breaching Christmas party. The video has poured fuel on allegations that officials in the Conservative government flouted coronavirus rules they imposed on everyone else. Its release came as Johnson urged people to work from home and introduced vaccine passes for crowded venues to try and slow the spread of the new omicron variant. "I understand and share the anger up and down the country" at officials seeming to make light of lockdown rules, Johnson said. "I was also furious to see that clip," he told lawmakers in the House of Commons. "I apologize unreservedly for the offense that it has caused up and down the country, and I apologize for the impression it gives."

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-lifestyle-christmas-europe-32571c5c7a550c8b418acb9e28e9815b>

### **Johnson imposes COVID-19 'Plan B' in England to contain Omicron**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson imposed tougher COVID-19 restrictions in England on Wednesday, ordering people to work from home, wear masks in public places and use vaccine passes to slow the spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant. Undermined by accusations that his staff partied at Downing Street during a Christmas lockdown last year, Johnson said Omicron was spreading rapidly and he had no choice but to move to "Plan B" while a vaccine booster programme rolls out.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-could-implement-covid-19-plan-b-early-thursday-times-radio-2021-12-08/>

### **Covid-19: Children aged five to 11 to be offered vaccine in Ireland**

Covid-19 vaccinations will be offered to children aged five to 11 in the Republic of Ireland. Irish Health Minister Stephen Donnelly has accepted advice from the National Immunisation Advisory

Committee (NIAC). About 480,000 primary school children in the Irish Republic will be offered a vaccine. According to RTÉ, it is likely to be January before the main vaccination programme begins, but some children may get their vaccine this month. The vaccine for this age group will be a lower dose than that given to older children. The NIAC strongly recommended that a vaccine should be given to children aged five to 11 who have an underlying condition, are living with a younger child with complex medical needs or living with an immunocompromised adult.

[https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59579582?at\\_custom4=25191E44-5819-11EC-99D6-19BF4744363C&at\\_custom2=twitter&at\\_medium=custom7&at\\_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at\\_campaign=64](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59579582?at_custom4=25191E44-5819-11EC-99D6-19BF4744363C&at_custom2=twitter&at_medium=custom7&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_campaign=64)

### **Moderna COVID-19 vaccine approved for booster shots in Australia**

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for use in booster shots for adults in Australia. Australia's medicines authority, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), has given the green light to the shot being used as a booster for people aged 18 and over. Until now, only the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has been available for booster shots in Australia. As is advised with the Pfizer booster shot, the Moderna booster shot should be given six months after the second dose of any COVID-19 vaccine. The TGA has also said immunocompromised people aged 12 and over can have a third shot as soon as 28 days after their second vaccine. The TGA said its decision to allow the Moderna vaccine to be used for booster shots was guided by expert advice from the independent Advisory Committee on Vaccines.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-vaccine-tga-approves-moderna-spikevax-covid19-vaccine-for-booster-shots-in-australia/99774685-4822-46c3-83e7-4b58f0f92b5e>

### **Spain approves COVID vaccine for children in 5-11 age group**

Spain's health ministry gave the go-ahead Tuesday for children between ages 5 and 11 to be vaccinated against COVID-19 amid a rise in coronavirus infections in recent weeks. Italy and Austria have also been inoculating children since the European Union's drug regulator on Nov. 25 authorized Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine for use on that age group. The European Medicines Agency's decision opened the way for jabs to be administered to millions of elementary school pupils across the continent. The Spanish health ministry tweeted news of the approval, following the decision of an expert committee. The rollout is due to begin Dec. 15, two days after the first of 3.2 million child vaccines arrive in Spain

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/spain-covid-madrid-hans-kluge-pfizer-b1971343.html>

### **China approves Bii Biosciences' COVID-19 treatment**

China's medical products regulator said on Wednesday it had approved the use of Bii Biosciences' neutralising antibody cocktail for COVID-19, the first treatment of its type against the virus given the go-ahead in the country. The combination of BR11-196/BR11-198 showed a 78% reduction of hospitalization and death in non-hospitalized COVID-19 patients at high risk of developing severe disease in a Phase III clinical trial, Bii said in October. The medicine from a Bii subsidiary was approved to treat mild COVID-19 and the disease of "normal type" with high risk of progressing to hospitalization or death in adults and minors aged 12-17, the National Medical Products Administration said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/china-approves-bii-biosciences-covid-19-treatment-2021-12-08/>

## **Maintaining Services**

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### **Omicron reported in 57 countries, hospitalisations set to rise, WHO says**

The Omicron variant has been reported in 57 nations and the number of patients needing hospitalisation is likely to rise as it spreads, the World Health Organization said on Wednesday. The WHO, in its weekly epidemiological report, said more data was needed to assess the severity of disease caused by the Omicron variant and whether its mutations might reduce protection from

vaccine-derived immunity.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/omicron-reported-57-countries-hospitalizations-set-rise-who-2021-12-08/>

### **EU expects Europe plants to produce 3.6 billion COVID shots in 2022**

Vaccine plants in the European Union are expected to produce 3.6 billion COVID-19 shots next year, out of a global output of more than 20 billion, two senior EU officials said on Wednesday. EU countries are administering boosters after having completed the primary vaccination of nearly 70% of the EU population, whereas in Africa only 7% have been immunised against the coronavirus, EU data show.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-expects-europe-plants-produce-36-billion-covid-shots-2022-2021-12-08/>

## **Healthcare Innovations**

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### **Pfizer says COVID booster offers protection against omicron**

Pfizer said Wednesday that a booster of its COVID-19 vaccine may offer important protection against the new omicron variant even though the initial two doses appear significantly less effective. Pfizer and its partner BioNTech said that while two doses may not be strong enough to prevent infection, lab tests showed a booster increased by 25-fold people's levels of antibodies capable of fighting off omicron. For people who haven't yet had a booster, the companies said two doses still should prevent severe disease or death. Health authorities in the U.S. and other countries have urged eligible people to get a third dose even before these results.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-business-health-coronavirus-vaccine-46a0cedcefcc938ba84ea2868bf69db1>